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HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ANNUAL REPORT
of the
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
for the year
1956

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LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE
25 JUN 1963

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical Officer for North Herts. Area):

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Divisional Health Office,
12 Brand Street, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 3757)

Senior Public Health Inspector and Cleansing Superintendent:

WILLIAM M. MATHEWS, Certs. Joint Board,
Meat and Foods,
San. Science,
Smoke Inspection.

Additional Inspectors:

ROBERT B. BOLT, Certs. Joint Board,
Testamur of Inst. of Public Cleansing.

LEONARD G. STRIBLEY, Certs. Joint Board,
Meat and Foods.

Council Offices,
21 Bancroft, Hitchin
(Telephone: Hitchin 4512-5)

Wm. E. Potter, Clerk to the Council.

To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the direction of the Ministry of Health Circular 19/56 I present an annual report on the health and sanitary condition of your district for the year 1956.

In view of the age composition of the population the local death rate of 10.3 is again very favourable (standardised rate 9.8). The live birth rate of 15.6 approximates to the national rate (15.7). While the still birth rate for the year was just above the national rate the infant mortality figure is seen to be exceptionally favourable, with the loss during the year of only one infant aged under 12 months.

The local incidence of serious infectious disease was again low and easing of the pressure for housing of families now allows your authority to make a start, already commenced, on the solution of the health problem due to disrepair of older properties.

I would again acknowledge having received from your chief officers every consideration and help during the year. In the compilation of the report I would acknowledge the help of your Senior Public Health Inspector, Mr. W. M. Mathews, who is wholly responsible for the sections touching upon sanitary environment.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

V. R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health

July 1957.

LOCAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	81,324
Home Population - Registrar-General's estimate for mid-1956	22,220
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April 1957 (estd.)	7,214
Rateable Value - 1st April 1957	£170,441
Sum represented by Penny Rate (estimate 1957/8)	£679

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1956

		Totals	Male	Female	HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable rates for England and Wales
LIVE BIRTHS	Legitimate	332	172	160		
	Illegitimate	15	7	8		
	All	347	179	168		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population					15.6	15.7
		Totals	Male	Female		
STILL BIRTHS	Legitimate	10	7	3		
	Illegitimate	-	-	-		
	All	10	7	3		
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births ...					28.0	23.0
		Totals	Male	Female		
DEATHS		229	115	114		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population					10.3	11.7

DEATH RATES OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE

All infants per 1,000 live births	2.9	23.8
Rate for legit. infants per 1,000 legitimate births	3.0	
Rate for illegit. infants per 1,000 illegitimate births	Nil	

Actual number of such deaths

	(a) Under 4 weeks	(b) Totals under 1 year
Legitimate	1	1
Illegitimate	-	-
	1	1

Deaths from pregnancy, childbirth or abortion	-
Deaths from Cancer (all sites)	33
Deaths from Measles	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough	-
Deaths from other infective and parasitic diseases ...	-

Comment on Vital Statistics

The estimated local mid-year population again shows a moderate increase (160).

Total live births numbered 347 against 350 in 1955 and total deaths 229 against 253.

Principal causes of Death

Of the total of 229 deaths, 80 were attributed to Heart and other Circulatory Diseases, 36 to Vascular Lesions of the Nervous System, 33 to Cancer (all sites) and 25 to Respiratory Diseases.

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

No important change occurred during the year.

SECTION C

Staff

The year saw the first of several significant changes in the public health world. The old title of Sanitary Inspector became superseded in August by that of Public Health Inspector, and the new Education Board is slowly being prepared for action. The national recruitment position remained grim and nearby Councils have found difficulty in making appointments, but such circumstances have not affected Hitchin Rural.

The staff has again been kept very busy as duties increase with the coming of new laws and requirements, and duties have been performed with a conscientious diligence worthy of mention.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

The water consumption throughout the area has continued

to rise. This is due not only to additional development but also to the modernisation of properties which is being carried out by this Council and also private individuals. The Council's Consulting Engineers are completing their detailed proposals for extensions at King's Walden Pumping Station where the position has become serious. The laying of water mains from Rabley Heath to afford a supply to The Node and nearby properties at Codicote was completed and also a link main to connect to the Knebworth Water Undertaking. This link has been provided at the expense of the Knebworth Water Company for use in time of emergency.

A scheme for water mains to serve the Parish of Radwell was prepared in the office and after some delay the Ministry authorised the work to proceed. Tenders were received in September and water was available in the mains at the end of the year. Various other short lengths of main were laid in other parishes to deal with new housing estates and development.

The extensions to Chipping Pumping Station were completed during the summer of this year and the position in the Eastern area of the district is now quite satisfactory. The water levels in the Council's boreholes differ very little from that of the previous years although they do reflect the general tendency for the sub-soil water level to fall in the chalk. The report of the Minister's Inspector regarding water supplies in Hertfordshire is still awaited and it is hoped that this will not be too long delayed.

Generally the position regarding the provision of water mains in the Council's area is now satisfactory, but the position is arising when in certain areas additional pumping capacity will be required. This is most urgent in the King's Walden area.

Two tables of analysis are submitted:-

1. Taken by the Council's Engineer and Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping stations into the mains.

2. Taken by the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table 1

Pumping Station	Total	Raw Water		Treated Water	
		Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Ashwell	4	4	-	-	-
Codicote	4	4	-	-	-
King's Walden	8	4	-	4	-
Wymondley	4	4	-	-	-
Braughing	No records - under control of Braughing R.D.C.				
Totals	20	16	-	4	-

Table 2

	No. taken	Satis-factory	Unsatis-factory	Doubt-ful
1. Council Undertakings				
King's Walden	18	14	2	2
Pirton (Holwell)	6	4	2	-
Hitchin-Braughing	8	8	-	-
St.Ippollitts	3	1	2	-
Offley	1	-	1	-
Hinxworth	1	1	-	-
2. Bulk Supplies				
Stevenage U.D.	2	2	-	-
Hitchin U.D.(Ickleford)	2	2	-	-
3. Other Sources				
Special Samples (private supplies)	42	18	24	-
Biggleswade Water Board (piped private supply)	1	1	-	-
	84	51	31	2

N.B. The "unsatisfactory" samples from Council Undertakings were taken from new mains. Further samples were taken and reported upon satisfactorily before these mains were put into service.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

Progress in the provision of sewerage and sewage treatment plans for the villages is still slow due to the present high cost of works and the Minister's credit restrictions. The new works at Holwell have now come into operation and work commenced on the Whitwell sewerage scheme during the summer. Steady progress has been made but it is not anticipated that the work will be completed until August or September 1957.

The outfall sewer from Knebworth has now been connected to the trunk sewer and we commenced discharging to the Rye Mead Sewage Works on the 1st April 1956, the old site at Knebworth coming into use for irrigating the storm overflow.

The Council's Consulting Engineers are engaged in the preparation of the scheme for Kimpton and although there has been no serious trouble there the position is very critical.

Public Cleansing Service

Refuse Collection and Disposal

The refuse collection service was found to be in need of an additional man to alleviate the needs of an expanding district, and this brought up the number on refuse collection etc. duties to 17 from October. In working practice, the service rarely runs for very long with a full complement and recruitment gets harder each year. A special investigation was performed during the year to check whether the Council's working conditions were in any way unreasonable and therefore responsible for the constant procession of staff. The Council came out of this enquiry rather well and it seemed that the difficulties of recruitment were principally related to the present conditions of full employment and better pay elsewhere rather than to any inherent fault in the Council's treatment of their men.

The working of overtime is a regular feature of the work when short-staffed, but this is cut down to a very low figure when a full complement can be maintained.

The year saw a reduction in salvage findings because from September the Board Mills were obliged to request limitation of despatches. This was not caused by the usual slump conditions but by the inability of the mills to complete the erection of new machinery of which they were very much in need. It was still

possible to despatch 127 tons however, and in the circumstances, this compared favourably with 140 tons in 1955.

Some figures relating to refuse collection and salvage appear below:-

Refuse Collected

Year	No. of Loads	Approx. weight of all materials collected	Vehicle (inc. foreman's van) mileage
1952	1822	3330 tons	47,314
1953	1947	3731 "	51,579
1954	2012	4398 "	48,758
1955	2012	3996 "	48,862
1956	1987	3859 "	50,327

Salvage

Year								
1948	-	64	tons	collected	and	sold	- income	£269. 7. 0d.
1949	-	53¾	"	"	"	"	- "	£180. 2. 6d.
1950	-	39	"	"	"	"	- "	£131. 6. 2d.
1951	-	56	"	"	"	"	- "	£837.11. 9d.
1952	-	35	"	"	"	"	- "	£346.13. 1d.
1953	-	22	"	"	"	"	- "	£119.17. 1d.
1954	-	92	"	"	"	"	- "	£627.11. 4d.
1955	-	140	"	"	"	"	- "	£1130. 4. 4d.
1956	-	127	"	"	"	"	- "	£991. 5. 5d.

Cesspool and Night-soil Collection

This service, consisting of two vehicles and four men, continued to render the usual free cesspool emptying once per financial year to domestic properties and chargeable service on other occasions. In 1955 the Public Health Committee considered ways and means of evening out the peak periods of the early and late parts of the year. In 1956, rather oddly, the work seemed to even itself out and so no action was taken along the lines originally decided. The limited pail collection service continued to operate and gave good service to the types of conditions that it is designed to serve. Several letters of appreciation have been received from elderly and disabled persons.

Details of work performed are given on the next page:-

Year	Houses in Private ownership Free	Houses in Private ownership Chargeable	Council Houses Free	Council Houses Chargeable	Loads from Sewage Works	Pails emptied
1952						
(Pet.veh.)	315	169	10	31	466	2947
(Dies.veh.)	156	86	18	30	262	1347
1953						
(Pet.veh.)	196	102	7	29	233	1812
(Dies.veh.)	343	186	20	122	314	2533
1954						
(Pet.veh.)	251	120	5	42	182	1934
(Dies.veh.)	313	168	21	139	450	2746
1955						
(Pet.veh.)	283	116	6	48	214	1850
(Dies.veh.)	375	177	16	72	507	3333
1956						
(Pet.veh.)	336	144	7	61	275	2724
(Dies.veh.)	352	156	18	56	404	2858

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

Warfarin continues to perform the job of rodent control in a very satisfactory manner. The Joint scheme serving the Hitchin Rural, Welwyn Rural and Royston Urban Districts continues to work well, and special contact was made with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to discuss the treatment of sewers. The technique seemed to be open to criticism and results have not been good. Therefore the matter was taken up, and nation-wide experiments with alternative methods are currently being made.

Information relating to the work done now follows:-

HITCHIN & WELWYN RURAL AND ROYSTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS
JOINT PESTS CONTROL SCHEME

SUMMARY

JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1956

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED						
	SEWERS	TIPS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUS. PREMS.	BLOCK INSP.	INSP. OF AGRIC.LAND	TOTAL
HITCHIN R.D.C.	93½	684½	180¾	22¾	37½	181¾	1200¾
WELWYN R.D.C.	18	139¾	48¾	2	-	16¾	225¼
ROYSTON U.D.C.	46	104¼	35	2¾	4¾	9	201¾
	157½	928½	264½	27½	42¼	207½	1627¾

Other figures -

TUR 871

Total mileage covered - 6709
Petrol used - 171
Approx. M.P.G. 39.23

Time spent on vehicle maint., receiving instructions, reports on visits, bait handling etc.	238¾
Total hours worked	1866½

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The following summary gives details of visits made and inspections performed. The use of Statutory procedure continues to be kept to the essential minimum.

The number of visits and inspections for all purposes was 3188, detailed as follows in comparison with the year 1955:-

	1955	1956
General Sanitation etc.		
Water Supply	144	98
Drainage	338	277
Cowsheds, Stables and Piggeries	1	6
Tents, Vans and Sheds (including Caravans)	204	165
Factories, Workplaces and Outworkers	36	29
Bakehouses	4	4
Licensed Premises	23	19
Refuse Collection and Disposal and Salvage	464	450
Rodent Control	88	54
Atmospheric Pollution	1	1
Schools	4	8
Shops	28	58
Petroleum Regulations	105	101
National Assistance Act	7	9
Places of Entertainment (Village Halls etc.)	-	25
Miscellaneous Visits	131	76
Housing		
Public Health Act - visits paid	624	496
Housing Acts - " "	373	610
Filthy or Verminous Premises - visits paid	49	4
Miscellaneous Visits	48	24
Infectious Diseases etc.		
Enquiries in cases of Infectious Disease	19	7
Visits re disinfection	5	5
" " food poisoning	4	1
Miscellaneous I.D. visits	3	-
Meat and Food Inspection (inc. inspection of premises)		
Slaughterhouses	617	560
Butchers	25	21
Dairies and Milk Distributors	6	5
Fishmongers and Poulterers	2	1
Food Preparing premises	6	-
Grocers	21	25
Greengrocers	2	5
Ice-Cream premises	8	31
Restaurants.	2	7
Milk (sampling)	22	-
Miscellaneous Food visits	16	6
	3430	3188

SECTION D

Housing

On the 31st December 1956 the number of applications on the Council's waiting lists for housing accommodation was 513, being 130 less than the previous year. During 1956, 114 new applications were registered and 244 were deleted from the lists. Approximately 135 of the applicants on the lists were re-housed, and the remaining 109 deletions were due in some cases to the applicants having left the district, but in a larger number of cases due to the applicants failing to renew their applications and not replying to enquiries as to whether they still needed accommodation.

The Council have continued their policy of transferring families from one type of property to another, so that the accommodation is used to the best advantage. Elderly couples and people living alone in three-bedroom houses have been re-housed in bungalows, thus making available the houses for larger families.

The number of properties for which Improvement Grants were approved during the year was 59, making a total of 244 properties since the inception of the scheme.

The following figures give the number of new dwellings completed during the year:-

No. of new permanent dwellings completed by the Council	79
No. of new permanent dwellings completed by private enterprise ..... (inc. one Nurse's house built by the Herts. County Council)	84
	163

Towards the end of the year the slum clearance position as it was likely to affect Offley, Lilley and King's Walden was considered and a lot of investigatory work was performed.

Caravans

The total number of vans in the area was 139, about half of which are on established sites. The occupiers do not cause the Council any serious trouble although the work of constant supervision and re-licensing takes up a lot of time.

SECTION E

Food

(a) Inspection of Meat and Other Foods

The main difficulty of meat inspection, viz., evening slaughtering, continues to operate. Early in the year a slaughterhouse in the Council's district was taken over by a London firm and used for extensive killing for "export" to Smithfield. The task of inspecting the animals meant that Inspectors were working until midnight, and the Public Health Committee were obliged to consider the matter. It was subsequently decided that a token inspection only would be performed upon those large numbers of animals being exported, and the matter was taken up with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and in other quarters. The best solution that could be obtained - the 'self-inspection' routine - was instituted and worked for several months, following which the slaughterhouse ceased to be used on the scale described, and a return to normal was experienced. Hundred-per-cent inspection of the carcases to be used in this Council's area is performed, and compensatory time off is allowed to the Inspectors who work at night to do the job.

Information relating to the inspections made is given next:-

Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part

	Cattle Excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number killed	536	15	609	2394	4690	-
Number inspected	536	15	609	2394	4690	-
All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci						
Whole carcases condemned	-	1	5	-	4	-
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	36	1	1	14	80	-
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than Tuber. and Cyst.	6.7	13.3	1.0	.6	1.8	-
Tuberculosis only						
Whole carcases condemned	-	-	1	-	-	-
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	16	1	-	-	12	-
Percentage of the number inspected affected with Tuberculosis	3.0	6.7	.2	-	.3	-
Cysticercosis						
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	5	-	-	-	-	-
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration	1	-	-	-	-	-
Generalised and totally condemned	-	-	-	-	-	-

Some information regarding food premises in the district is given below:-

Type of Business	No. in district
Grocers and Confectioners	84
Butchers (inc. cooked meats)..	15
Bakers	11
Fishmongers (wet fish)	3
Fried fish shops	2
Fruiterers, Greengrocers and Confectioners	6
Confectioners	4
Cafes, Restaurants and Catering establishments	19
Public Houses	88
Off-Licence	6
Brewers and Manufacturers of Mineral Waters	2
Dairies (retail)	7
" (producer/retailers) ...	2

The number of premises in the district registered under Section 16 of the Food & Drugs Act 1955 for the Sale of Ice-Cream is 66, and for the Preparation or Manufacture of Preserved Food etc. 36, of which 9 are not now in active use. The number of dairies registered under the Milk and Dairies Regulations 1949-54 is 9. There were approximately 70 inspections of registered food premises during the year.

No educational activity (e.g. the inauguration of clean food guilds or classes) has been undertaken. In a vast rural district where travelling is difficult the best instruction is that given to the shopkeeper by the visiting Inspector. For this reason it is important that time should be available to perform such duties, for they need much tact and patience. In practice, due to pressure of other work, the activities under the Food Hygiene Regulations 1955/6 and similar work have not received the attention needed, and it will be necessary to observe whether this situation can be improved in other years.

Inspection of foodstuffs continues, to ascertain their fitness for human consumption. The weight of foods condemned was:-

	Tons	Cwts.	Qtrs.	Lbs.	Ozs.
Tinned Food	-	1	3	16	1
Pork	-	11	2	6	-
Mutton	-	-	3	-	-
Beef	-	15	1	15	-
Veal	-	2	1	6	-
	1	11	3	15	1

Disposal of organic materials is usually achieved by despatching to a fertiliser processing plant. Tinned goods are normally sent to the Council's refuse tips.

There are no Ice-Cream Manufacturers in the Council's area.

(b) Milk

The year was not troubled by complaints of souring milk, no doubt due to the dismal summer experienced, but sporadic complaints were investigated as necessary.

During the year, 16 Dealer's Licences were issued in respect of the sale of Designated milks from 9 premises in the district, and 25 Supplementary Licences were granted to 14 firms retailing Designated milks in the district from premises situated elsewhere.

(c) Food Poisoning

As stated in Section F of this report, there were no confirmed cases of food poisoning in the district during the year.

(d) Factories Acts 1937 and 1948

An abstract from the report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572 is given herewith:-

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Public Health Inspectors)

Premises	No. on Register	Number of - Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs. 1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	13	-	-	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority	90	17	-	-
(iii) Other prems. in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excl.Outworkers' prems.)	1	-	-	-
TOTAL	104	17	-	-

2. Cases in which defects were found

Particulars	No. of cases in which defects found: Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	No. of Prosecutions
Want of cleanliness	-	-	-	-	-
Overcrowding	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temp.	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate ventilation	1	-	-	1	-
Ineffective drainage of floors	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary conveniences (a) Insufficient	-	-	-	-	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	1	1	-	-	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	2	1	-	1	-

Outworkers. There are 26 Outworkers reported in the district.

SECTION F

Prevalence of, and control over, Infectious and other Diseases

For the year local notifications of acute infectious disease (after correction) were: Measles 248, Whooping Cough 9, Infective Hepatitis 12, Scarlet fever 16, Acute pneumonia 8, and Puerperal pyrexia 1.

The incidence of measles fell mainly in the first and to a lesser extent in the second quarter.

Scarlet fever (quarterly incidence 9,4,0,3) was again infrequent, sporadic in distribution, mild in severity and confined almost entirely to children of infant-school or pre-school age.

Infective Hepatitis (quarterly incidence 5,4,2,1) continued to occur following the outbreak in the western area of the district during the previous year, dying out only after the summer school vacation. With an incubation period of 4 weeks between cases, three quarters of whom were of school age, this slowly spreading infection was closely connected with a contemporary outbreak in the urban district; many cases of gastro-intestinal upset without jaundice were identified in the households of notified cases of jaundice.

No confirmed cases of either poliomyelitis or of food poisoning was reported from any part of the rural district during the year. One death during the year (in a middle-aged male) was registered as due to acute poliomyelitis. Subsequent enquiries suggested a vascular lesion of the nervous system as the cause; the case was not notified during life and no other case was reported in the district during the year.

Diphtheria was again absent from the district during the year. Nevertheless the ~~acceptance~~ effect of immunisation for protection against this formerly dreaded disease continues to be accepted by a good proportion of parents; for infants under two years the offer of combined immunisation against both diphtheria and whooping cough was particularly popular.

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Deaths during the year 1956

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	-	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	1	3(2)	-	-	-	-	-	1
25 - 35	4(3)	2(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
35 - 45	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
45 - 55	3(1)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
55 - 65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
and over	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not known	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	12(4)	7(4)	-	1	1	-	-	2
Deaths allocated by the Registrar General after final transfers ...					-	-	-	2

Footnote. Figures of new cases include inward transfers from other areas, the numbers of such being shown additionally in brackets.

Comment.

New notifications of respiratory tuberculosis in the local population (as distinct from inward transfers) are seen to number 11 (8 males and 3 females) with one case of non-respiratory disease.

Two (female) deaths from non-respiratory tuberculosis are finally allocated to the district, both in younger adults.

V. R. WALKER

July 1957.

District Medical Officer of Health

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
LIBRARY